

Dear Marshall Miles,

July 29, 2017

It has come to my attention that you requested via Facebook a letter from a Board of Education member accounting for the meeting on June 27th, 2017.

According to the agenda and minutes from July 26, 2016, there was discussion at the Fall Village/Canaan Board of Education meeting about demographics, declining enrollment and what that might mean for continuing to provide high quality education for the students of Falls Village. That discussion included a visit from a Kellogg alum who is tackling those questions in her town.

The references in Superintendent reports to enrollment history and projections are regular and available in many minutes. According to a number of Falls Village Board of Education agendas and minutes since June 26, 2016, the discussion has continued, including a visit from Jonathan Costa related to enrollment, including this from the February 27th, 2017 minutes

“Old Business:

A. Falls Village public education program planning follow up. After some discussion L Mittaud made a motion to authorize Chair Gall to contact Cornwall Consolidated and North Canaan Elementary Boards of Education to propose/gauge interest in formal board to board discussions of collaboration among the districts including discussion of combining districts. Seconded by K Lindquist. All were in favor and the motion carried.”

As indicated that was done and a response was received from North Canaan’s Board via their Board Chair, which was read at the June 6, 2017 meeting. From those minutes:

“Written communications to the Board:

1. Faculty request for non--resident child to attend LHK. 2. A letter to the Board from North Canaan Board of Education agreeing to a joint meeting with Canaan Board of Education”

and later

“Old Business. Falls Village Public Education Program Planning.

The North Canaan Board of Education is agreeable to meeting with the Canaan Board of Education to discuss collaboration and sharing of resources. Discussion ensued. Chair Gall agreed to propose several dates this summer for a special meeting between North Canaan and Canaan Boards of Education.”

You can see the quite public and transparent discussions over the course of a whole year that led to said meeting.

Normally, any regular and special meetings are posted by the Board Clerk and emailed to the Board, the principal, regional rep, Shared Services Office and Town Hall. My judgment error in

letting the meeting be posted last minute to the Town Hall, rather than through the Board Clerk, had the effect of excluding our Principal, First Selectman and possibly other folks from attending. I've spent much time apologizing for THAT exclusion, though not for the meeting itself.

The minutes of said meeting were approved at the July 25, 2017 regular Board meeting on Tuesday night, a meeting I was not able to attend. At the actual meeting on June 27, I said we were meeting to brainstorm possible ways to collaborate. There was an accounting for the ways our children are sometimes together already like Park and Rec sports, daycare and shared field trips and regional events. There was a prepared and articulate speech from North Canaan's Board Chair with numbers crunched from public budget documents, in which she suggested what it MIGHT look like fiscally to combine districts outright using the NCES building. There was friendly conversation about the pros and cons of the idea of combining districts. I and others emphasized the fact there has to be clear and mutual educational AND fiscal benefits for any change in school structuring to be considered. Our board member Lara Mittaud agreed to meet with the North Canaan Board Chair and the Regional business director sometime this summer in order to crunch numbers more, and then bring their findings to the regular September Board of Education meeting - a perfectly reasonable follow-up to our many regular meeting discussions even if we hadn't found a time to meet at boards.

FYI, a day after on June 28th, 2017, I sent a letter to my board and principal and board clerk and superintendent and some town officials indicating that I resign as Board Chair. The reasons: due to anticipating signing a contract (which has since happened) for a for a new job - returning to the classroom, after 8 years raising my kids, as a 7th / 8th grade Science and Math teaching at NCES - I (1) am devoting time to my interest in public education in a new way and (2) noting a conflict of interest that compels me to recuse myself from some board business like interviewing my colleagues for the interim principal position and like discussing declining enrollment with neighboring towns - brainstorming myself right of a job! and pass the duties to Board member Lara Mittaud through November when a new board will be elected along with new officers. I appreciate very much that she has taken the role and is making sure that board business is attended to.

I thank you for your efforts and am always happy to field a phone call or email.

Take care,

Rachel Gall